



Illinois English Bulletin

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Ten Illinois Colleges

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Freshman Composition Courses in Ten Illinois Colleges

The November 1951 issue of the *Bulletin* was devoted to descriptions of freshman composition courses in twelve Illinois colleges and universities. The prefatory remarks in that issue indicated that the descriptions were being published to provide a "partial and indirect answer" to the following question frequently posed by English teachers in the secondary schools: "How can we better prepare our students to meet the demands that will be made of them in freshman composition courses in college?" The frequent requests during the last nine years for copies of that issue indicate that teachers have found it most useful. However, much of the information in that issue is now out of date. The present issue is aimed at correcting this defect by publishing up-to-date descriptions of the programs in some of the same schools.

In the preface to the 1951 issue, two specific points were made which need to be repeated now. One, the following reports are not to be taken as attempts on the part of either the colleges, individually or collectively, or the *Bulletin* to dictate the content or emphasis of high-school English courses. Two, the colleges neither expect nor desire that high-school students be taught the same subject matter that they will be taught in college. Rather, the emphasis should be on the students' *general* preparation for their next level of study, not specific preparation for a particular course.

Freshman English at Blackburn College

BY EDWARD LYONS

The aim and content of the Freshman course in English at Blackburn College, according to the current Blackburn College catalogue are as follows:

101. Written English. A course in written communication, including consideration of the techniques of writing with emphasis on exposition; the reading of selected essays; extensive review of the fundamentals of correct form; training in the use of the library, especially works of general reference and periodicals; study of the dictionary and the use of words. Frequent practice in writing; discussion of organization, logic, and style. Conferences with instructor. Three class meetings a week.

102. Written English. A continuation of English 101, including further work in exposition and in outlining; training in the preparation of research papers; the familiar essay; narration and description; study of short stories, plays and poetry. Three class meetings a week.

Oral work by the students is limited to class analysis of assigned reading, but the discussions are demanding, and slovenly expression is exposed. The object is to identify rhetorical devices and structure, and learn how to use them. In English 101 the readings include one novel. The student writing is expository.

At present we have neither advanced or remedial sections in Freshman English. The Blackburn work plan provides the department with an upperclassman to tutor poor students. His work is faculty supervised. Formal grammar is otherwise dealt with by classroom discussion of composition problems found on student themes before they are handed back, and by individual conferences.

We do not expect freshmen to be literary critics or stylists upon arrival, but those who arrive with a meager vocabulary, a reading background confined to Frank Yerby, Lloyd C. Douglas, and the *Reader's Digest*, who arrive ignorant of spelling, punctuation, parts of speech, sentence structure, and the architecture of the expository paragraph find themselves at an unfair disadvantage. They may never catch up.

The Freshman Composition Course at Bradley University

BY PAUL SAWYER

A battery of placement tests determines which students may enter the accelerated sections of Bradley's Freshman English program and which must enroll in the standard, two-semester course, English 101 and English 102. Those in the accelerated classes (these comprise about five per cent of our total registration at the present time), after satisfactorily completing a normal academic year's work in one semester, are required to elect a one semester course "Intermediate Writing." It is described by the catalogue as "Designed for students beyond the freshman level. Practice in the four major forms of discourse and opportunity for individual writing projects."

All other degree-seeking students at Bradley join the regular two semester English Composition course, summarized by the catalogue in this way: "Correct and effective presentation of ideas. Practice in the types of writing most often used by both students and adults in business and professional life." More specifically, the first part of the course is composed of ten units: the process of composition; punctuation and mechanics; grammar review; the rhetoric of a sentence; the paragraph; using the dictionary; formal and informal diction and slang; the book review; spelling; the research paper.

Students write the following types of themes: autobiographical (the first in-class theme of the semester); process; mechanisms and organizations; people; ideas; definition; analysis; book review; a research paper; and a final theme. Usually students write at least three of these themes, all of them except the first and possibly the last based on supporting materials in our text, in class. After being graded, themes are returned to the student for correction.

In the second semester, units of study include vocabulary development, the qualities of words, description, narration, argumentation, business letters, and the research paper. Students write themes appropriate to these units.

Minor changes are made in these syllabi to conform to the content of new textbooks adopted for the course. Since our present text includes some readings, we have not required our students to purchase an anthology, but we have enriched the course by adding a good modern novel of reasonable length.

Several department-wide examinations are given. A diagnostic test in the first week of the semester helps to reveal areas in which students are particularly weak. A spelling test, based upon a list of commonly misspelled words in our text, is administered about midway in English 101. At the end of each semester students take an objective type examination prepared by a final examination committee.

No longer does Bradley offer an "X" section, meeting five hours a week instead of the customary three, for deficient students. The university encourages students whose records or placement tests reveal English inadequacies to enroll in a recently established summer course in English fundamentals. The department recommends that students who are conscious of their poor background (the diagnostic test frequently makes this consciousness inevitable) obtain an approved workbook. Printed keys to this workbook are available at the library for students to consult. If their answers disagree with those listed in the keys, students are urged to discuss these discrepancies with their instructors.

All students for baccalaureate degrees must take an English achievement examination after completing English 102 and a minimum of 56 semester hours. Students who fail this test, which consists of a 500 to 700 word theme on one of a wide variety of subjects, must pass a special, non-credit one-semester course reviewing the fundamentals of correct English.

Freshman English at Elmhurst College

BY GORDON COUCHMAN

The freshman English course at Elmhurst College is planned to aid the student in mastering the essentials of grammar and rhetoric and in learning the significant methods of reading for an understanding of the values of literature.

All students are required to take freshman English. The work of the first semester deals primarily with careful and exact reading of essays and with practice in expository writing, stressing organization, fundamentals of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage. During the first semester the student is required to write at least ten themes, averaging about four hundred words in length. Usually at least three of these themes are written in class.

The work of the second semester includes practice in reading the short story, poetry, and drama. There is continued practice in writing, including assignments in research and criticism.

It is generally believed that the students who do best in freshman English are those who have had extensive practice in writing in high school. Formal grammar is stressed only after the English teachers have detected the student's weakness, through careful reading and checking of themes and through individual conferences.

Freshman English at Millikin University

BY RUTH ANDERSON MAXWELL

At Millikin University two standard forty-minute tests covering mechanics and reading comprehension are administered and used by the admissions office, but the scores are passed on to the English Department for further use in the placement of freshmen. The Department administers a theme test during the orientation period. Students whose test scores are low are placed in sections meeting four times a week for three hours of credit. Those whose scores are high are assigned to sections meeting three times a week. Currently we have one section made up of twenty students taking a non-credit preparatory course. Our view is that it is better to teach these students at their level of reading and writing than to run the risk of having to fail them at the end of the first semester in freshman English. It should be added that we hope to be able to discontinue this section in 1960 or very soon thereafter. It should be added further that instructors are free to shift students from one type of section to another during the opening two-week period and at the end of the first semester.

The course in freshman English deals almost entirely with exposition. It aims primarily to assist the students in the development of the ability to think clearly and to express thought purposefully and coherently. The student has achieved this objective when he can write a series of chain paragraphs that develop a single controlling idea. He has achieved it when he can bring to his work (1) an organization that is clear in purpose and orderly in arrangement; (2) development that is adequate and reasonably mature; (3) familiarity with the paragraph as a unit of thought and as a part of a longer theme; (4) familiarity with patterns of thinking—with methods of expanding thought; and (5) accuracy in the formation of sentences.

Much of the writing is linked with what the student reads. A second aim is therefore to help the student develop ability to interpret the printed page. He is asked to discover key concepts—words or sentences or paragraphs—to distinguish between primary

and secondary statements; and to summarize or outline certain pieces of expository writing. He reads to find out how others have handled ideas and to consider how methods and structure used by others can be valuable to him. Certain pieces generate discussion—and here oral English finds a place. Many of the articles stimulate thinking that may lead to a topic for written work. Or the articles themselves may be drawn upon for various types of assignments. For example, the student may be asked to answer some specific questions specifically and coherently.

The materials of the course include a book of readings, a handbook, and a good dictionary. Assignments vary among instructors. In the first semester from twelve to fifteen themes are assigned. In the second semester the student writes one fairly long or two short library papers and from eight to ten other themes, some of which may be digests of what he has read. An instructor may of course make use of several short writing projects that have been classified here as themes.

"Drill books" are not used in the freshman course at Millikin. Grammar is approached through errors in student writing and through material in the handbook of English usage. In four-hour sections there is more emphasis on mechanics than in other sections. The students in these classes are not prepared to do the work that should reasonably be expected of them in college, and are therefore required to devote an extra period to English. No block of time is set aside for a review of formal grammar or for special drills. Errors are marked with reference to the handbook. Explanations are made in class when a matter seems to concern several students. Exercises to determine progress are used in class or even at times made the basis of an assignment. The students must revise all his themes.

Entering students are not necessarily handicapped if they have only a slight knowledge of grammatical terminology but are able to read simple prose pieces and to write with reasonable purposiveness. But ordinarily the student who writes a clear paragraph has a fair command of grammatical terminology. Terminology has become for him a tool; a means of considering relationships and of talking about them. Grammar is functional. A knowledge of it is linked closely with the student's ability to recognize the sentence as a unit of thought made up of subject and predication; to differentiate between main phrasing and modification.

The job of teaching English in the public schools is a big and challenging one. It is a big and challenging one at the college

level too, for neither the high school nor the college teacher gets the support he deserves from other departments. Further, our job has been complicated by the anti-intellectualism that has swept over America and by the many "inconveniences"—to quote Robert Hutchins—to which the modern student is subjected. Classes are too large, for administrators at both levels are unwilling to take into account the time an English teacher must spend in conference and in criticizing themes in such a way as to make his remarks a part of the teaching process. Educators have come to believe that English is a skill which need not be emphasized separately.

High school teachers deserve much commendation for the improvement shown recently in the test scores made by entering college freshmen; nevertheless, with the description of a college program, they may rightfully expect a few suggestions. (1) Try to develop in the student a pride in linguistic skill and to make him see that he will be called upon to use this skill throughout his life. (2) Make use of a few simple prose pieces that are clear in structure. (You may have to find your own, for educators and textbook makers have too often been imbued with a desire to orient pupils and have consequently come up with such texts for the teacher as *Guiding Students in the English Class*. Let's not become missionaries dedicated to adjusting pupils in a world where we need the uncommon man. The English teacher will find that he has enough to do if he confines his efforts to teaching the student how to read for enjoyment and for accurate interpretation and how to express an idea clearly.) (3) As often as time permits, make use of assignments in which the student is called upon to answer a specific question specifically or to develop a topic sentence in a brief paragraph that is unified and consistent in point of view. Teach him that new sentences grow from what precedes. Assignments need not call for lengthy writing. Some of them should be based on reading that has been assigned.

Freshman English at Mundelein College

BY SISTER MARY PHILIPPA, B.V.M.

Mundelein college freshmen are assigned to English classes on the basis of their standing in placement tests, including the college board examination. Poorly prepared students—at present, largely students of foreign background, with English as a second language—are placed in a special course, Fundamentals of English, which

carries, however, college credit, and substitutes for the first semester of Rhetoric and Composition; superior students are assigned to Advanced Composition; above-average and average, to Rhetoric and Composition.

The class in Fundamentals rarely numbers more than fifteen members, and the two sections of Advanced Composition average twenty each. The classes in Rhetoric are somewhat larger, though an effort has been made to keep them down to about twenty-five in each section.

Students in the Fundamentals class are expected to make up their linguistic deficiencies within a semester, and since they are usually intelligent but relatively unpracticed in English, they ordinarily reach this goal, or make considerable progress toward it.

Students in the Advanced Composition classes are encouraged to join the staff of the Mundelein newspaper (*The Skyscraper*) or of the magazine (*The Mundelein College Review*). More and better work is expected of them both in reading and writing, and great latitude is given to the instructors so that the curriculum for the more gifted students may be as flexible as possible.

The general techniques of expository writing are stressed in all freshman English classes in the first semester, with the term paper occupying much of the time in the second quarter. Rhetoric and Composition is looked on primarily as a tool subject, to improve the student's reading and writing skills in every course, and to orient her in general to the intellectual life of the college. For these reasons, stress is laid on the correct techniques of outlining, whether for reading or writing; on accurate summarization and note-taking; on ethics in the use of source material; on the proper methods of answering various kinds of essay questions. Reading and writing assignments center on various aspects of a liberal education.

Every effort is made to motivate the student to hand in only the best work she is capable of, and to clear up at once mechanical errors. Each student is responsible for making up deficiencies in her own preparation by recourse to indicated sections in the handbook. The instructor's work, as we see it, is to build on the training properly expected of the high school graduate, not merely to rework the same ground.

The second semester is devoted to reading and exercises in argument and persuasion; to reading and critical analysis of short stories, familiar essays, and short poems. Outside reading is assigned for both semesters, in the novel, biography, drama, epic, and other literary forms. Students are expected to present critical

reviews of their reading, such reviews taking the place of the usual weekly themes.

Last June, an attractive reading list of novels and biographies was distributed to prospective freshmen and to underclassmen, in the hope of filling more profitably the intellectual vacuum of the long vacation. The project was successful and will be developed further this year.

Freshman English at Northern Illinois University

BY ORVILLE BAKER

Freshman English in this institution consists of two four-hour writing courses: the first dealing with expository prose, the second with the term paper and shorter critical compositions. All students except those exempted on the basis of a standardized examination and a theme of high quality take the first course. Approximately five percent of our entering freshmen achieve exemption; but exempted students may elect to take either the regular first-semester course or substitute for it a sophomore literature course. All students take the second semester's work, English 104.

Writing assignments in exposition (first semester) are twelve 500-word themes, about half of which are done in class. The emphasis is on organization, sentence construction, diction, and effective communication, with grammar treated functionally. Considerable time is devoted to interpretation of essays, to the development of reading skill, to vocabulary building, and to training in accurate thinking.

Students who make a grade of D in this course must take a Junior Proficiency Examination before being admitted to senior standing and candidacy for a degree. The examination is a theme, with proficiency determined as the C level at the end of the course in exposition.

Both the first- and second-semester courses carry four hours of credit but meet only three times a week as a class, the fourth hour being assigned conference time. In the second semester the material branches out into types of literature and the writing of analyses and criticisms. As far as possible, instructors are given latitude in choice of texts. Writing requirements are: a term paper of considerable length dealing with literary subjects; and six or more short papers. Footnote techniques are regarded as essential but less important than interpretation and analysis of texts. Some

attention is given to the writing of business letters in this second semester, but this unit is not regarded as indispensable if time does not permit its inclusion.

A final examination is given in both courses, but although it may cover the literature studied in the second semester, the student's grade is determined by his writing ability, not his memory of details.

N.I.U. has no non-credit course. Beginning this year the Teachers' College Board has directed its member institutions to discourage applications from students graduating in the lowest third of their high school class, and already the improvement in the quality of freshman writing is apparent. Those whose written expression is still below our standard are urged to attend a Writing Clinic, staffed by graduate students who can give individual attention to problem cases. The regular staff is instructed to concentrate its efforts on those whose probability of success in college is average or better. As soon as scheduling permits, the department will divide students in both courses into homogeneous groups so that the college can offer most students a genuine college-level rhetoric course.

A necessary note: three sections of freshman English are a full assignment for an instructor in this department.

Freshman English at Northwestern University

BY WALLACE W. DOUGLAS

The Northwestern English Department believes that freshman English is a separate and legitimate stage in the development of young people's control of language. Freshman English has its own subject matter and skills, and these are distinct from those treated and practiced in high school. In no sense is Freshman English at Northwestern a remedial course, designed to do "what ought to have been done" in high school, grade school, kindergarten, or the family. It is rather a college level course in rhetoric and critical reading.

We do not section our students according to ability; but a departmental tutor (a graduate student) is provided for weak students, who are required to attend special conferences with the tutor and to do appropriate exercises—revision of their papers, grammar drills when they seem useful, vocabulary and spelling assignments, special reading assignments, etc. The School of

Education offers remedial reading courses, which some freshmen take.

We do exempt a certain number of students. But we can not think of exempted students as "those who do not need this remedial work," since English A10 is not a remedial course. Rather we hope that we pick for exemption students who seem qualified to work at a more advanced level. Exempted students may take any of the regular Sophomore English courses or (by invitation) either Freshman or Sophomore honors courses. The latter are run as very small discussion groups; the material is masterpieces of world literature which are used as subjects for close analysis.

As implied above, the subject matter of Freshman English at Northwestern is the students' writing and reading. Our objectives are defined by two practical questions: Can the student write effectively? Can he read intelligently and sensitively? Not much time, therefore, is spent learning grammatical nomenclature or trying to apply it to English sentences. Probably most of the staff would agree that most students already more or less know enough terminology so that they can talk about those few problems in their writing which result from their inexperience with the grammar of the written dialect. It is probably fair to say that structural analysis has not yet had much impact on most of the staff, or indeed on the Syllabus for the course.

The Department has prepared an extensive syllabus for English A10, giving a full explanation of the philosophy of the course and also a suggested class plan. This is available on request.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE: WRITING

Students in English A10 are expected to be familiar with the conventions of standard contemporary usage in more or less formal writing. Through reading and discussion they should learn the qualities of contemporary style at its various levels. On the basis of this relatively factual knowledge and by continual practice in writing, they should improve their control over the contemporary forms of written communication. They should use a dialect which observes the conventions of current standard English, and they should learn the styles and organizations of current writing, so that in their future writing they will be able to choose forms which will be appropriate to themselves, their audiences, and their subjects. The over-all purpose of the course is to help students to recognize the means that will help them toward full and adequate communication of their ideas and attitudes.

Students write nine or ten papers in the fall quarter and about five in each of the other two quarters. Some of these will be class papers. There are final examinations and some members of the staff give mid-terms.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE: READING

The purpose of reading literature in English A10 is to increase the range and intensity of the students' response to literature; to give them some relatively sophisticated examples of literature to work on, so that they can develop "a full and appropriate response to what deserves to be called 'literature.'" Part of this full and appropriate response is just learning to enjoy reading; therefore, some effort is made to show the students the humane values of reading.

Used with discretion, the method of critical analysis by class discussion seems best suited to the ends of the course. In order to carry on such discussion, the students will need a technical vocabulary; so they should understand the meanings of such terms as theme, plot, action, motivation, characterization, point-of-view, and others; they should understand how these various aspects of a story work together to produce a total effect. But that effect should always be analyzed, as much as possible, in terms familiar to the student.

Freshman Composition at Southern Illinois University

BY FRED K. LINGLE

Preliminary to their enrollment in Freshman Composition at Southern Illinois, students are given a Placement Examination in terms of which they are grouped homogenously into A sections, meeting three times a week; B sections, meeting four times a week; and C sections, meeting five times a week. Approximately the upper ten percent are in A groups, the lower twenty-five percent in C groups, and the remainder in B groups. All sections work toward a credit of three quarter hours.

The purpose of the course as stated in the Syllabus is given below:

The purpose of Freshman Composition is to help you have ideas worth writing, to help you to write clearly, and to help you to write interestingly. Since reading skills are important in the getting of ideas and in the acquiring of writing skills, you will spend considerable time reading and discussing literary works. Also you will be

expected to know or to acquire the techniques necessary for the writing of *Standard English*. Although you will study the works of professional and "creative" writers as examples, you will not be expected to acquire professional skill nor to do "creative" writing.

The amount of writing will vary each term. It should, however, be the equivalent of eight papers of a minimum length of two hundred and fifty words—

At the end of each term the Department of English gives identical examinations to all students in B and C sections of each composition course. Thus all students in B and C sections will take identical tests. This means that you will be competing with all B and C students in 101, 102, 103, and not competing only with those in your particular section.—by the end of 102 all students should avoid the following errors :

Sentence fragments

Run-together sentences

Comma splices

Lack of subject-verb agreement

Lack of subject-pronoun agreement

Faulty reference of pronouns

Dangling constructions

Misplaced modifiers

Faulty parallelism

Confusing punctuation

Confusing paragraph development

Inadequate statement or development of the main theme

At present the material for the B and C sections is the same, except that all themes in the C sections are written in class. In these groups Rhetoric 101 is concerned chiefly with the sentence, 102 with the paragraph, and 103 with the theme as a whole, including a documented paper. Although other approaches have been tried, the present approach seems the most satisfactory to a majority of both the students and the instructors.

In Rhetoric 101 considerable time is given to a functional presentation of structural grammar. The consensus seems to be that a knowledge of the structure of language is especially valuable to slower students. When the grammatical approach has been slackened, failures tend to rise. During the teaching of grammar, the more obvious defects in the paragraph and the theme as a whole are discussed in theme conferences. More and more the

value of conferences is apparent. The number of conferences is limited only by the paucity of staff.

In Rhetoric 102 and 103 B and C more and more attention is given to the reading of literature, especially essays. There are several values derived from the procedure. First, the students gain considerable insight into contemporary informal style. Second, they become more aware of acceptable usage. Third, they acquire a wider experience in possible plans of organization. Fourth, they expand their vocabularies. Fifth, and certainly not least, they gain some ideas worth thinking and writing about. This is not intended as an exhaustive list of values.

In the A sections an attempt has been made to give the instructor a considerable amount of freedom. The courses are outlined broadly, only, and some choice of materials is allowed. No formal grammar is taught. The students are required to buy a handbook to which they may be referred to correct technical errors. If the errors persist, the student is remanded to a lower section. All formal presentation of structure is given in 101A; 102A is concerned with The Nature of Language, and 103A, with A Critical Analysis of Literary Types. There has been considerable discussion about combining sections B and C. So far, no one has suggested abandoning A sectioning.

Probably most difficulty is encountered in getting students to state a theme and develop it logically.

English Composition at the University of Chicago

BY EDWARD WASIOLEK

As determined by placement examinations, about ten per cent of entering Chicago students are excused from English composition altogether, forty-five percent take a two quarter course, and forty-five percent take a three quarter course. A very small number, about five percent, are required to take a one quarter non-credit course in basic writing skills in addition to three quarters of regular composition.

The placement test is a two-hour essay written by all entrants on one of a list of topics sufficiently diverse and general that the student should not feel handicapped by a lack of knowledge of any one of them. If a student writes an essay relatively rich in content, clear and logical in organization, and free from errors in mechanics, he will be excused from English altogether. If his paper is free of fundamental errors and somewhat sophisticated in style, but weak in organization, he will be required to take a two quarter course in composition. If his paper is reasonably free

of fundamental errors, but weak in organization, thin in content, and ungracious in style, he will be required to take three quarters of composition.

Our entrance tests include a reading comprehension test which identifies students who need special remedial work in reading. Ordinarily about ten percent of the entrants are advised to take Basic Reading Skills.

Each of the three quarters of the College English course is represented by a syllabus compiled by members of the staff. Essentially, the course is designed to familiarize the students with the most useful techniques of exposition and argument to the end of improving their writing. We do not undertake the study of literary forms; the Humanities courses as well as specialized courses in the various departments of literature treat poetry, fiction, and drama. Nor do we offer work in speech, although our work of the second quarter touches on matters often taken up in course of public speaking.

The classroom procedure and focus of each quarter of the three-quarter course are as follows. The theoretical basis for a principle or technique is presented briefly; the students are asked to identify the principle or technique and to demonstrate its function in the readings they have before them; and, at the end of each unit, they prepare a theme which embodies the principle or technique as a structural device. Some of the selections in the syllabi are analyzed as models useful for students to follow; others are intended to provide material for them to draw on in writing their own essays.

In the first quarter we study the chief varieties of exposition: nonfictional narration and description, definition, classification and division, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect. Although for teaching purposes the structural patterns are taken up singly, students are encouraged to use in their own themes combinations of these patterns appropriate to their purpose in writing.

In the second quarter we study principles and techniques of argument. Although students are introduced to formal logic and are given practice in constructing syllogisms, the emphasis is on the practical application of these principles in writing a developed and rhetorically effective argument. In this quarter we also take up methods of refutation and ways of accommodating to the audience, matters which are often handled in courses of public speaking. In addition to the traditional study of logical forms, we introduce students to a few of the classical topics or sources of argument. This is perhaps our chief innovation in the course. We

have found the topics useful not only as a means of analysis but also as a device for directing students towards various broad categories in their search for subject matter for their papers. During 1953 two articles written by members of the staff on the theory and application of the topics appeared in *College English*: "Looking for an Argument," by Messrs. Bilsky, Hazlett, Streeter, and Weaver, pages 210-216 of the January issue; and "The Argument of Madison's 'Federalist,' No. 10," pages 37-45 of the October issue.

After two quarters in which students learn to give form to expository and argumentative materials, they are asked in the third quarter to concentrate upon the linguistic texture of their writing. Under two general rubrics, words and sentences, students learn to discriminate levels of abstraction, to become aware of the importance of context in using words precisely, to choose a tone consistent with their purpose, and to recognize the importance of variety, length, parallelism, subordination, and position in constructing effective sentences. All of this is finally directed toward encouraging each student to develop a style of his own.

The two-quarter course differs from the three-quarter course in devoting less time on style and the techniques of description and narration. The emphasis on structural principles is essentially the same, as is the classroom procedure of presenting them.

We do not separate out any particular period of the course for instruction in grammar. Most of us handle problems of grammar and syntax as they come up in students' papers. After each assignment is completed, we mimeograph papers and discuss them in class. In preparing their themes, students are expected to use a handbook. We have also bound into the first volume of the syllabi a pamphlet, *Elements of English Grammar*, prepared a few years ago by a faculty committee. For students not entirely innocent of the subject, this pamphlet has proved to be useful and stimulating.

We ask our students to write a minimum of eight themes each quarter, ranging from 500 to 1000 words in length. In addition, instructors often assign briefer exercises to fit particular writing problems. Students receive one grade of record for the course, whether two quarters or three quarters in length. The grade is determined by what we call "the cumulative comprehensive." The grade is partly determined by the papers students write during the year and partly by anonymously graded essays, three hours in length, given at the end of each quarter. These essays are graded by at least two instructors. Papers written outside of class for

the instructors and the anonymously-graded quarterly essays are progressively weighted as the course develops. We do this to preserve our traditional concern to penalize lightly, if at all, work done early in the learning process and to reward heavily the end achievement of students.

Freshman Rhetoric at the University of Illinois

BY FRANK B. MOAKE

At the University of Illinois all students are required to complete successfully two courses in Freshman Rhetoric or the equivalent thereof, or to demonstrate such proficiency in writing as would justify their exemption from one or both of these courses. The two courses are Rhetoric 101 and Rhetoric 102. The greatest change made in the rhetoric program during the last ten years came this year with the dropping of no-credit, remedial Rhetoric 100.

Though we no longer make special provision for deficient students by offering a remedial course, we do make some special provision for superior students. For the last two years the University has had a group of honors students designated the Edmund J. James Scholars. In line with the policy of offering special accelerated and enriched courses, or special sections of existing courses, for these students, we reserve sections of Rhetoric 101 and 102 for these James Scholars. Since this program is still experimental and consequently somewhat fluid, a detailed description here would be virtually worthless. It should be pointed out that the Rhetoric Division has nothing to do with the selecting of James Scholars. Students must apply for that honor; the University Director of Honors Programs must approve their application. We hope that this program can be considerably expanded in the future to accommodate students of our own selection who demonstrate unusual ability as writers and that we can establish new rhetoric courses for these students and the James Scholars.

The first two class meetings of both Rhetoric 101 and 102 each semester are devoted to proficiency examinations. In both courses the examination consists of two parts—an objective test and an impromptu essay. In Rhetoric 101 the objective test is a one-hundred-item multiple-choice examination covering vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction. In Rhetoric 102 the objective test is a test of reading skill. The students are given about twenty-five minutes to study a mimeo-

graphed essay. At the end of that time the essays are collected and the students are given fifty multiple-choice questions about the essay they have just read.

In both courses grading is done by a committee of three rhetoric instructors, two of whom must agree on a recommendation for exemption before a final decision is made by the Director of Freshman Rhetoric, who may, and frequently does, deny the recommendation of the committee. Normally, no student is considered for exemption unless he makes a score in the high 80's or 90's on the objective test; however, no score on the objective test is high enough to gain the student exemption unless he also writes an excellent impromptu essay. We believe that no student should be exempted from the Freshman Rhetoric requirement unless he can demonstrate in the practical test of writing that he has a very thorough mastery of the English Language as a vehicle for communicating facts, opinions, and ideas. Few students are granted exemption.

The broad, general aim of the whole rhetoric program is to help the student become as effective a user of the English language as his native ability permits. Somewhat more specifically, the aim of Rhetoric 101 is to help the student learn to use his language correctly and effectively in the writing of exposition. To this end, certain methods are rather uniformly employed.

First, we believe that in order to learn to write, one must write. Accordingly, we require of our students about one composition each week. About half of these are impromptu. We emphasize the impromptu for two reasons: 1) By forcing the student to organize and develop his ideas in a short time, the impromptu gives him some preparation for the most intensely practical of all kinds of writing he must do—the writing of examinations. 2) The impromptu is the best test of a student's "instinct" where matters of usage are concerned.

After the compositions are marked, graded, and criticized by the instructor, they are returned to the student for revision. This stage we believe to be of great importance, especially in helping the student learn to write more correctly. Since we want to teach writing, not grammar and mechanics, we do not spend much class time on these matters. Instead, we refer the student to the appropriate section of his handbook and expect him to deal with his individual problems pretty much on his own. Also, since many of the most troublesome errors result not from ignorance but from habitual carelessness, we feel that forcing the student's at-

tention to his own mistakes by requiring regular revision of his work will encourage him to replace bad habits with good.

Concurrently with the writing and revising of his own work, the student studies the work of other writers—professional and amateur. A collection of essays exposes the student to the work of professionals; our magazine of freshman writing, *The Green Caldron*, and the widespread practice of reading aloud or, preferably, mimeographing the work of his classmates exposes him to the work of his peers. The study of this work has a two-fold purpose: 1) to provide the student with models for emulation and for analysis in relation to such points as organization, paragraphing, diction, and sentence construction, and 2) to provide some stimulus to thought and writing. We feel that, in many ways, the study of work done by fellow-students is more beneficial than the study of that done by professionals.

Finally, we emphasize very strongly the value of private conferences as probably the best way to help the student understand his individual problems and the best ways of dealing with them.

Rhetoric 102 differs from Rhetoric 101 in several ways. In the first place, the student is expected to do more sustained and more mature work. Secondly, the general type of writing emphasized is argumentation; consequently, considerable attention is devoted to the study of techniques of persuasion and of sound reasoning processes. Thirdly, since one of the stated aims of the course is that of improving the student's ability to read, much attention is devoted to reading as a skill. Finally, since the major writing project of Rhetoric 102 is a documented library research paper, the student is instructed in elementary research procedures and proper forms of documentation. The general methods for achieving these aims do not differ significantly from those described for Rhetoric 101.

One other course demands brief mention here, even though it is not a part of the Freshman Rhetoric program. All students who make a grade below B in Rhetoric 102, or in an equivalent course at another institution, are required to pass the English Qualifying Examination or, failing that, Rhetoric 200, before they are granted a degree from the University of Illinois.

